

Do Iranian Women Follow Their Parents? Intergenerational Educational Mobility Among Women in Rasht, Iran

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Original Article

Abstract

Background and Aim: Social mobility, a core dimension of stratification systems, remains understudied among women in Iran despite its theoretical significance for understanding social inequality. This study examines intergenerational educational and occupational mobility among married women in Rasht, addressing gaps in gender-specific research and evaluating the link between educational attainment and professional advancement.

Data and Method: A cross-sectional survey of 800 married women in Rasht was conducted using a stratified random sampling design based on age, education, and district strata. The questionnaires collected demographic, parental, and respondent education and occupation data, analyzed through mobility matrices and log-linear models.

Findings: The study reveals significant differences: 79.97% of respondents achieved upward educational mobility relative to their fathers, and 89.93% relative to their mothers. In contrast, only 36.6% attained upward occupational mobility relative to their fathers. This mismatch challenges the assumption that educational gains translate linearly into professional progress, indicating that structural labour market barriers constrain women's career trajectories.

Conclusion: The findings highlight persistent gender barriers to translating education into occupational mobility in Iran. To maximize social returns and reduce inequality, policymakers must enforce pay transparency, subsidize childcare, and implement public-sector management quotas for women, utilizing this actionable empirical baseline.

Keywords: Educational mobility, Intergenerational mobility, Occupational status, Social mobility, Social stratification.

Key Message: Theoretically, this study shows that in contexts like Iran, educational and occupational mobility can no longer be assumed to be two sides of the same coin. This decoupling of concepts requires a rethinking of conventional models of social mobility and a critical reevaluation of the 'social returns' on the substantial investment in women's higher education.

Received: 05 July 2025

Accepted: 14 January 2026

Citation: Namazi, A., Rafiey, H., Mousavi, M., Setareh Forouzan, A., & Ghaedamini Harouni, G. (2026). Do Iranian women follow their parents? Intergenerational educational mobility among women in Rasht, Iran. *Journal of Social Continuity and Change*, 4(Special Issue), 7-32. <https://doi.org/10.22034/JSCC.2026.SI01.23343.1281>



Introduction

Social stratification sociologists are interested in research on the openness of societies, with social mobility and class stratification are classic topics in this field (Van den Berg, 2011). The concept of social mobility is important for the study of societies as it represents equality of opportunity. Increasing equality of opportunity, in turn, requires addressing the multiple layers of disadvantage faced by different groups within a population (Chapman, 2020).

A body of literature examines the forces that propel or hinder this mobility, consistently highlighting how an individual's socioeconomic starting point in life shapes their future prospects and the extent to which talent is rewarded with equitable opportunities (Burger et al., 2024; Chapman, 2020). In other words, social mobility shows the extent to which individuals can move between socioeconomic strata throughout their own lifespans and across successive generations (OECD, 2018).

This mobility is conventionally analyzed through several key distinctions. Generally, there are two primary types of social mobility: horizontal mobility, which refers to transitions within the same social stratum (e.g., changing a business or nation), and vertical mobility, which involves movement to a higher or lower stratum, thereby encompassing both upward and downward mobility) (Alesina et al., 2021). Furthermore, social mobility manifests in two temporal forms: intragenerational (occurring within an individual's lifetime) and intergenerational (occurring across generations). Intergenerational mobility—measured by comparing children's progress in education, income, or occupation relative to their parents, is a common indicator of equality of opportunity (Hoseini, 2019). Traditionally, scholars have identified a wide range of factors influencing this progress; parental wealth, education, and social status matter significantly, though their relative importance varies across national contexts (Breen & Ermisch, 2024; Hoseini, 2019). Historical observations indicate that if mobility opportunities are available to individuals within a society, they will be able to achieve their desired and merited positions by acquiring the necessary expertise, skills, and qualifications (Bagheri, 2019). Alternatively, such pathways are facilitated by high economic growth, expansion of the middle class, and moderate levels of social inequality, as observed in East Asia or the post-war United States (Marginson, 2017).

Today, in modern sociological discourse, education occupies a central role in these dynamics. Modern occupational positions are often conceptualized as being filled according to meritocratic principles, such as educational attainment, rather than social origin (Andlib et al., 2024; Thijssen & Wolbers, 2016). Consequently, researchers argue that education plays a dual and somewhat contradictory role in social stratification and mobility. On the one hand, it

functions as a means of intergenerational transmission of status, given that advantaged families actively facilitate longer or superior education for their offspring, which subsequently leads to better employment opportunities and higher incomes. On the other hand, as Featherman and Hauser (1978) explain, "...education played a direct role ... that countered the stratifying effect of the former role. Thus, the occupational handicap of birth into a low social stratum might be overcome by education" (Witteveen & Attewell, 2020). Social mobility is thus affected at various points in the educational continuum: early childhood learning, primary and secondary school achievement, higher education transitions, the internal stratification of higher education systems, and the subsequent transition from higher education into the graduate workforce (Marginson, 2017). Driven by these mechanisms, growing enrollment in education, coupled with booming economies and a high demand for skilled labor, has historically raised collective expectations for widespread upward social mobility (Thijssen & Wolbers, 2016). However, the dynamics of mobility are profoundly shaped by local social structures and gender norms. In Iran, as in many developing societies, women's pathways to social advancement represent a critical yet underexplored dimension of stratification. Specifically, the link between women's educational attainment—which has risen significantly in recent decades—and their subsequent professional trajectories remains ambiguous within the Iranian labor market. The city of Rasht, with its distinct socio-cultural profile, provides a pertinent context to examine this disconnect further.

The relationship between education and mobility remains complex and heavily mediated by multiple structural factors. While certain empirical evidence has shown that intergenerational mobility is higher among individuals with a university degree than among those with lower educational qualifications, recent trends indicate that mobility among master's degree holders is declining. This finding questions the meritocratic power traditionally attributed to higher education (Torche, 2018). Indeed, one of the most important findings of social stratification research confirms a significantly positive relationship between social origin and status attainment in modern societies—a relationship that is predominantly mediated by educational status (Kim et al., 2023). Entering a university is now perceived as a primary route toward achieving a higher social position (Rafiee et al., 2020). In this process, the family plays an instrumental role in the individual and social development of children (Harsej et al., 2021), as domestic resources significantly dictate academic success and future career prospects (Zhuo et al., 2023). The most critical resource is economic capital—including wages, assets, and direct investments such as tuition for prestigious institutions—which families strategically deploy to secure their children's educational and professional futures (Rafiee et al., 2020).

In addition, studies have demonstrated that the welfare of households in general, and children in particular, depends on the educational level of women. A broad empirical literature on this topic highlights that higher maternal educational attainment, often utilized as a proxy indicator of a mother's bargaining power within the household, is positively associated with better school attendance and outcomes for children in both developed and developing countries (Dolan & Lordan, 2020).

Furthermore, Chung and Park (2019) demonstrate that social mobility increased among Korean male birth cohorts between 1950 and 1984, with later cohorts experiencing more pronounced mobility effects. Employing a counterfactual decomposition method, their study revealed that educational expansion significantly enhanced social fluidity—primarily through educational equalization in earlier cohorts and compositional effects in more recent ones (Chung & Park, 2019).

Social hierarchy measurements have traditionally relied on established class schemas or occupational prestige scales, such as the Eriksson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) schema or the Duncan Socioeconomic Index (SEI) (Torche, 2018). Occupation-based class measures remain influential in sociological research, as they capture socioeconomic status more comprehensively than static indicators like current income (Liu et al., 2025). Additionally, occupations, much like educational attainment, can be quantified using cardinal measures such as occupational prestige scales (Stuhler, 2018).

Moreover, due to historical data availability and the traditional dominance of males in the formal labor force, empirical estimates of intergenerational mobility have predominantly focused on father-son status associations (Torche, 2018).

The degree of social mobility varies substantially across countries and societies. Prior research has also shown that experiences of downward mobility undermine social trust, subjective well-being, and mental health (Becker et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2023). Consequently, assessing mobility trends remains critical to understanding broader societal dynamics.

This study addresses a critical empirical gap. While some studies suggest that Iranian society has grown more open due to expanded opportunities for upward mobility (Ahmadi, 2025; Raghfar et al., 2015), few have examined women's mobility using rigorous, gender-specific empirical frameworks. The present study addresses this lacuna by analyzing intergenerational educational and occupational mobility among women (aged 30–65) in Rasht relative to their parents, using mobility matrices and quantitative measures. The two central research questions guiding this article are: 1). Has educational mobility occurred

among women in Rasht? 2). Has educational mobility translated into occupational mobility among women in Rasht?

Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

The concept of social mobility is important for the study of societies, as it reflects the distribution of equal opportunities (Van den Berg, 2011). The majority of the literature on social mobility explores the underlying factors that cause individuals to move upward or downward within a society (Burger *et al.*, 2024) and examines the extent to which an individual's starting point in life determines their future life chances (Chapman, 2020; OECD, 2018).

Generally, there are two primary types of social mobility: horizontal and vertical mobility. The transition of a person from one social position to another within the same social base is called horizontal mobility. Conversely, the passage from one social stratum to another, whether upward or downward, is referred to as vertical mobility (Alesina *et al.*, 2021). In addition, there are two forms of social mobility: intergenerational and intragenerational. Intergenerational mobility (IGM) measures the probability of socioeconomic success relative to the socioeconomic status of a person's parents and is a common indicator of the equality of opportunity within a society (Breen & Ermisch, 2024; Hoseini, 2019).

In July 2018, the World Bank published a detailed report titled "Fair Progress". The report's main findings indicate that IGM tends to be much higher in high-income countries than in developing ones, and this pattern has not changed over the last few decades (Leone, 2019a).

Education can serve as a ladder of social mobility for lower-income children when public education systems are opened to widespread access rather than restricted to a limited few. Furthermore, education leads to sound occupational opportunities (Becker *et al.*, 2025). Today, occupational positions in modern societies are increasingly thought to be filled according to meritocratic principles, such as formal education levels, rather than ascribed social origins (Thijssen & Wolbers, 2016).

Some studies acknowledge that family resources and structural opportunities affect individuals' academic success and future prospects, as advantaged families regularly facilitate longer or higher-quality education for their offspring, which subsequently leads to better jobs and higher incomes (Witteveen & Attewell, 2020; Zhuo *et al.*, 2023). For this reason, the stronger the influence of family background on educational achievement (meaning the greater

the educational inequality), the more likely it is that adult earnings are associated with childhood family income (Xu & Li, 2025; Harsej *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, another study focusing on the higher education context found that intergenerational mobility was higher among university graduates than among those with lower educational attainment (Torche, 2018). However, the role of higher education institutions is intertwined with policy dynamics over time and with variations across countries and political regimes; therefore, the macro-context cannot be neglected (Kromydas, 2017). In this respect, an analysis of the United Kingdom's Social Mobility Commission in 2016 indicated that, despite an increase in educational attainment, Asian Muslim youth in this country did not see these gains reflected in actual labor market outcomes (Friedman *et al.*, 2017).

Although developing countries, in general, exhibit higher income inequality and lower intergenerational mobility, Kim's study (2015) reveals that South Korea belongs to a distinct group of countries characterized by both relatively low income inequality and relatively high intergenerational mobility. At the same time, the educational gap between social classes in South Korea is widening, leading to increasing pessimism about the traditional role of education as a means of social advancement (Kim & Lee, 2022).

Among Asian countries, Indonesia has made significant improvements in gender equality, and substantial progress has been made to fill overall infrastructure gaps. This country was one of the first in the region to establish a separate ministry dedicated to the role of women. However, gender gaps in education and technical skills persist, limiting women's ability to participate in current and future labor markets (World Bank, 2020). Bangladesh is another South Asian country that has made considerable progress in improving the lives of women and girls and in closing gender gaps over the past two decades (Das, 2021). Despite this relatively strong growth, South Asian countries continue to show very low levels of educational attainment compared with more developed countries elsewhere (Leone, 2019b).

Methods and Data

Social mobility is most commonly measured in terms of occupational prestige, educational attainment, and income. This study employs a cross-sectional analytical design to examine intergenerational social mobility, with data collected between January and June 2020. A structured, researcher-administered questionnaire was utilized, comprising two distinct sections:

1. Socioeconomic and demographic data obtained through face-to-face interviews.
2. Occupational and educational mobility metrics derived from detailed participant and parental life histories.

Occupational status for both respondents and their parents was classified using Naebi's 9-category occupational classification, ranging from 0 (housewives/unemployed) to 9 (high-status professionals, such as physicians, academics, and secondary school teachers) (Masoumirad, 2015). Intermediate categories within this scale reflect graded levels of occupational prestige (e.g., skilled laborers, clerical workers). To enhance measurement precision and accurately group occupational status, supplementary questions assessed: employment type (salaried employee, self-employed, or employer with employees). Job authority, and sector (public versus private). Occupational mobility was subsequently quantified as the difference between the participant's occupational score and that of her father (Lo Bello & Morchio, 2022). Also, since some jobs may not be in this category, in order to more accurately determine the job status group, in another question, the job power of individuals and being salaried or self-employed and self-employed, being an employer and having subordinate employees.

Educational attainment was measured as the total number of completed years of formal schooling, aligned with Iran's national education system: 0 years (no formal education), 1–5 years (incomplete primary education), 6–11 years (primary/lower secondary or pre-diploma), 12 years (high school diploma), 14 years (upper diploma/associate degree), 15–16 years (bachelor's degree), 17–18 years (master's degree), and 22–23 years (PhD or higher equivalent).

To estimate intergenerational educational mobility, mobility matrices were constructed to capture the conditional probability of a daughter's educational achievement given her mother's education level. These percentages provide conditional probabilities; that is, the probability that a daughter will attain a specific educational level given that her mother possessed a specific educational background. Diagonal values within the matrix indicate absolute social immobility between the mother and daughter generations. Consequently, when all diagonal values equal one, the matrix represents perfect stillness; conversely, if all diagonal values equal zero, it signifies a condition of perfect mobility.

Intergenerational educational mobility transitions were formally classified into four distinct trajectories:

- **Stable-low/low:** characterising low educational attainment across both generations.
- **Upward:** reflecting low parental education but high offspring attainment.
- **Stable-high/high:** signifying high educational attainment sustained across both generations.
- **Downward:** indicating high parental education followed by low offspring attainment.

Content validity for the instrument was established via expert review involving 15 faculty members specializing in sociology and psychology. Reliability testing was deemed unnecessary due to the objective nature of the measures, such as verified years of schooling and standardized occupational prestige codes.

The study was conducted in Rasht, the capital of Gilan Province, located in northern Iran's central plain. Prior research by Danesh *et al.* (2016) classified Rasht's five administrative regions into distinct socio-economic tiers using taxonomic and TOPSIS modeling: Regions 1 and 2 were identified as developed, Regions 3 and 4 as developing, and Region 5 as less developed (Danesh *et al.*, 2016). Given the large size of the target population, we employed a stratified random sampling approach with a two-stage probabilistic design. In the first stage, two districts were randomly selected from each of the five development-stratified regions. In the second stage, urban blocks within these selected districts were systematically sampled, with sample sizes allocated proportionally to the local population distribution.

To account for regional cluster variability and potential nonresponse bias, a design effect of 2 was incorporated into the sampling calculus, yielding an initial distribution of 800 questionnaires. Ultimately, 748 completed and valid responses were retrieved and included in the final analysis. After receiving ethical approval, eligible women filled out questionnaires. A full explanation of the research objectives and process was provided upfront to all participants; they were informed of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any juncture without penalty. Verbal informed consent was secured from each respondent before data recording commenced. The inclusion criteria required participants to be married women currently residing in Rasht at the time of data collection, aged between 30 and 65 years. Individuals over the age of 65 were excluded to prevent confounding effects, as older individuals often transition into retirement roles that diverge significantly from their primary career trajectories. Full willingness to participate and the cognitive ability to communicate verbally and complete the survey were also mandatory.

Certain methodological limitations must be acknowledged. To mitigate the confounding

effects of age or life histories, we restricted our sample to respondents who were at least 30 years old and married at the time of the interview. This criterion is supported by empirical literature confirming that most individuals achieve occupational maturity around the age of 35 (Mugiyama & Toyonaga, 2022). While this choice enhances analytical validity, it resulted in the exclusion of a large number of respondents, especially single women and those under 30. Furthermore, because data were collected using a self-report methodology, the potential for social desirability bias, over-reporting, or under-reporting must be considered.

Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Prior to hypothesis testing, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to assess the normality of the data distribution, which confirmed that the distribution is normal. Consequently, parametric test was then used. Pearson correlation and partial correlation tests. also, multiple linear regression analysis to assess the relationship between women's educational outcomes and occupation. The $P \leq 0.05$ was considered as significance level.

Findings

This study contributes to the growing sociological literature on women's intergenerational mobility by revealing paradoxical trends in contemporary Iran. The descriptive findings begin with an overview of the sample's demographic characteristics. As shown in Table 1, the frequency distribution of women by educational level indicates that the majority (41.7%) held a Bachelor's degree, while only 6.1% had education below a high school diploma.

Table 1- *Frequency distribution of women surveyed according to education level*

	Women		Fathers		Mothers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	2	0.3	102	13	219	27.9
Elementary	6	0.8	112	14.3	133	17
High school	40	5.1	214	27.3	197	25.1
Diploma	183	23.3	172	21.9	125	15.9
Associate Degree	80	10.2	51	6.5	37	4.7
Bachelor's degree	327	41.7	112	14.3	59	7.5
Masters	128	16.3	20	2.6	12	1.5
PhD and above	18	2.3	1	0.1	2	0.3

* Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

1. Educational Mobility: Intergenerational Comparison with Parents

To assess intergenerational educational mobility, transition matrices were constructed comparing participants' educational attainment with that of their parents (Tables 2 and 3). Row percentages indicate the proportion of daughters who attained higher, lower, or equal status relative to their parents, whereas column percentages reflect the parental status distribution.

1-1. Father-Daughter Educational Mobility

Table 2 presents the matrix comparing daughters' educational status with their fathers' education. The diagonal cells represent educational persistence (immobility), cells below the diagonal indicate downward mobility, and cells above indicate upward mobility. Results show that 79.97% of daughters achieved higher education than their fathers, while 17.22% remained at the same level, and only 2.81% experienced downward mobility. A structural asymmetry is evident: daughters of highly educated fathers experienced exclusively upward mobility, whereas daughters of the least educated fathers were the only group to show any measurable downward educational mobility.

1-2. Mother-Daughter Educational Mobility

Table 3 displays the mobility matrix between daughters and their mothers. The main diagonal indicates immobility; cells above denote upward mobility, and cells below denote downward mobility. Remarkably, 89.93% of daughters attained a higher educational level than their mothers, whereas only 8.93% remained at the same level and a mere 1.14% (fewer than 3% of the sample) experienced downward mobility. Intergenerational persistence of illiteracy was exceptionally rare ($n=2$). This near-universal upward trend underscores a dramatic educational leap among women across generations, regardless of the mother's starting educational level.

Table 2- Matrix of intergenerational Educational Mobility: Father-Daughter Comparison

Education status of the subjects		Father's education status								Sum
		8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
8-PhD and above	N	1	0	7	0	4	3	1	2	18
	Column%	100	0	6.3	0	2.3	1.4	0.9	2.0	
	Row %	5.6	0	38.9	0	22.2	16.7	5.6	11.1	
7-Masters	N	0	14	33	17	25	25	5	9	128
	Column%	0	70	29.5	33.3	14.5	11.7	4.5	8.8	
	Row %	0	10.9	25.8	13.3	19.5	19.5	3.9	7.0	
6-Bachelor's degree	N	0	6	65	26	86	81	37	26	327
	Column%	0	30	58.0	51.0	50.0	37.9	33.0	25.5	
	Row %	0	1.8	19.9	8.0	26.3	24.8	11.3	8.0	
5-Associate Degree	N	0	0	5	3	20	26	19	7	80
	Column%	0	0	4.5	5.9	11.6	12.1	17.0	6.9	
	Row %	0	0	6.3	3.8	25.0	32.5	23.8	8.8	
4-Diploma	N	0	0	2	4	34	64	40	39	183
	Column%	0	0	1.8	7.8	19.8	29.9	35.7	38.2	
	Row %	0	0	1.1	2.2	18.6	35.0	21.9	21.3	
3-High school	N	0	0	0	1	3	14	8	14	40
	Column%	0	0	0	2.0	1.7	6.5	7.1	13.7	
	Row %	0	0	0	2.5	7.5	35.0	20.0	35.0	
2-Elementary	N	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	6
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	1.8	2.9	
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	33.3	50.0	
1- No formal education	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.0	
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	
Sum		1	20	112	51	172	214	112	102	784

* The aggregated intergenerational educational mobility statuses are: 627 (79.97%) upward, 135 (17.22%) immobile, and 22 (2.81%) downward.

Table 3- Matrix of intergenerational Educational Mobility: Mother-Daughter Comparison*

Education status of the subjects			Mather's education status							Sum	
			8	7	6	5	4	3	2		1
8-PhD and above	N		1	0	5	0	2	4	5	1	18
	Column %		50.0	0	8.5	0	1.6	2.0	3.8	0.5	
	Row %		5.6	0	27.8	0	11.1	22.2	27.8	5.6	
7-Masters	N		0	8	19	16	31	21	15	18	128
	Column %		0	66.7	32.2	43.2	24.8	10.7	11.3	8.2	
	Row %		0	6.3	14.8	12.5	24.2	16.4	11.7	14.1	
6-Bachelor's degree	N		1	4	33	16	65	98	43	67	327
	Column %		50.0	33.3	55.9	43.2	52.0	49.7	32.3	30.6	
	Row %		0.3	1.2	10.1	4.9	19.9	30.0	13.1	20.5	
5-Associate Degree	N		0	0	2	4	13	22	20	19	80
	Column %		0	0	3.4	10.8	10.4	11.2	15.0	8.7	
	Row %		0	0	2.5	5.0	16.3	27.5	25.0	23.8	
4-Diploma	N		0	0	0	1	14	43	42	83	183
	Column %		0	0	0	2.7	11.2	21.8	31.6	37.9	
	Row %		0	0	0	0.5	7.7	23.5	23.0	45.4	
3-High school	N		0	0	0	0	0	8	8	24	40
	Column %		0	0	0	0	0	4.1	6.0	11.0	
	Row %		0	0	0	0	0	20.0	20.0	60.0	
2-Elementary	N		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	6
	Column %		0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	2.3	
	Row %		0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	83.3	
1- No formal education	N		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Column %		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.9	
	Row %		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	
Sum			2	12	59	37	125	197	133	219	784

* The aggregated intergenerational educational mobility statuses are: 705 (89.93%) upward, 70 (8.93%) immobile, and 9 (1.14%) downward.

2. Occupational Mobility and Labor Market Status

The analysis of current employment status reveals that a majority of respondents were outside the formal labor force, with housewives comprising nearly one-third of the sample. Among employed women, private sector employment and wage-based positions predominated.

2-1. Current Employment and Occupational Distribution

Analysis of current employment status shows that a majority of respondents were outside the formal labor force (32.7% housewives). Among employed women, the largest group (21.4%) held upper-middle class positions. Regarding employment sector, 55.3% worked in the private sector and 44.7% in the governmental sector. In terms of labor force position, 66.2% were wage or salaried employees, 25.0% were self-employed without employees, and 6.5% were self-employed with employees. Table 4 summarizes these distributions.

2-2. Intergenerational Occupational Mobility: Father-Daughter Comparison

Table 5 presents the occupational mobility matrix between daughters and their fathers. Only 19.9% of women maintained the same occupational status as their fathers, indicating limited status reproduction. Notably, downward mobility (43.5%) exceeded upward mobility (36.6%), contrasting sharply with the educational mobility patterns where upward movement dominated. Daughters from the highest paternal occupational categories achieved exclusively upward mobility, whereas those from middle and lower-middle groups showed increased downward mobility or status persistence. This divergence suggests structural barriers in the labor market that hinder the translation of educational gains into occupational advancement.

2-3. Mother-Daughter Occupational Mobility and Regression Analysis

Table 6 shows the mother-daughter occupational mobility matrix. A distinct pattern emerges: upward mobility (60.71%, $n=476$) is dominant, intergenerational status persistence is substantial (31.7%, $n=249$), and downward mobility is limited (7.52%, $n=59$). This indicates a clear net upward shift in occupational status across generations of women. All daughters in the top occupational category achieved upward mobility relative to their mothers. However, among lower strata, 33.3% of women in the low stratum experienced status persistence, and approximately 40% of those in the very low stratum faced downward mobility.

Correlation analyses confirmed significant associations between educational and occupational mobility, with a stronger father-daughter correlation ($r=.297$, $p<.001$) than mother-daughter ($r=.269$, $p<.001$). The persistent positive correlation between education

and occupational prestige ($r=.185$, $p<.001$) underscores education's enabling role, though it is not sufficient to overcome all occupational mobility constraints.

Multiple linear regression models (Table 7) further elucidated these relationships. For father-daughter occupational mobility, the model ($R^2=.24$) identified three significant predictors: educational mobility ($\beta=.582$, $p<.001$), father's education status ($\beta=.514$, $p<.001$), and father's occupational classification ($\beta=-.312$, $p<.001$). The mother-daughter model ($R^2=.38$) explained more variance: educational mobility ($\beta=.546$, $p<.001$), mother's education status ($\beta=.492$, $p<.001$), and mother's occupational classification ($\beta=-.510$, $p<.001$). The strong negative coefficient for mother's occupational status suggests that maternal occupation imposes an even more powerful constraint on daughters' occupational mobility than paternal occupation, possibly reflecting the direct transmission of gender-typed occupational tracks.

Table 4- *Distribution of subjects classified according to occupational status*

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Occupational status		
Excellent class	3	0.4
Very Upper class	6	0.8
Upper class	28	3.6
Upper-Middle class	168	21.4
Middle class	212	27
Lower-Middle class	85	10.8
Lower class	21	2.7
Very Lower class	5	0.6
housewife	256	32.7
Employment		
Governmental	234	44.7
Private	289	55.3
Labor power		
Domestic services	12	2.3
Wage and salaried	346	66.2
Self-employed without employees (Independent)	131	25
Self-employed with employees	34	6.5

Table 5- Matrix of intergenerational occupational mobility of women in comparison with the occupational status of fathers

<i>The subject's occupational classification</i>		<i>Father's occupational classification</i>									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1-Excellent class	N	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
	Row %	0	0	0	33.3	66.7	0	0	0	0	
	Column%	0	0	0	1.0	1.0	0	0	0	0	
2-Very Upper class	N	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	6
	Row %	0	0	16.7	16.7	16.7	33.3	16.7	0	0	
	Column%	0	0	5.0	1.0	0.5	0.8	0.5	0	0	
3-Upper class	N	0	1	4	4	9	7	2	1	0	28
	Row %	0	3.6	14.3	14.3	32.1	25.0	7.1	3.6	0	
	Column%	0	33.3	20.0	3.8	4.5	2.9	1.0	6.7	0	
4-Upper-Middle class	N	0	0	5	43	53	41	20	6	0	168
	Row %	0	0	3.0	25.6	31.5	24.4	11.9	3.6	0	
	Column%	0	0	25.0	41.0	26.8	16.9	10.0	40.0	0	
5-Middle class	N	0	1	6	31	66	63	43	2	0	212
	Row %	0	0.5	2.8	14.6	31.1	29.7	20.3	0.9	0	
	Column%	0	33.3	30.0	29.5	33.3	25.9	21.5	13.3	0	
6-Lower-Middle class	N	0	0	0	8	21	30	25	1	0	85
	Row %	0	0	0	9.4	24.7	35.3	29.4	1.2	0	
	Column%	0	0	0	7.6	10.6	12.3	12.5	6.7	0	
7-Lower class	N	0	0	1	0	4	2	13	1	0	21
	Row %	0	0	4.8	0	19.0	9.5	61.9	4.8	0	
	Column%	0	0	5.0	0	2.0	0.8	6.5	6.7	0	
8-Very Lower class	N	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	5
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	80.0	0	0	
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	0.4	2.0	0	0	
9-housewife	N	0	1	3	17	42	97	92	4	0	256
	Row %	0	0.4	1.2	6.6	16.4	37.9	35.9	1.6	0	
	Column%	0	33.3	15.0	16.2	21.2	39.9	46.0	26.7	0	
Sum		0	3	20	105	198	243	200	15	0	784

* Summary of mobility: Downward: 341 (43.5%); Immobility: 156 (19.9%); Upward: 287 (36.6%).

Table 6- Matrix of intergenerational occupational mobility of women in comparison with the occupational status of Mothers*

The subject's occupational classification		Mother's occupational classification									Sum
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1-Excellent class	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	
2-Very Upper class	N	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	6
	Row %	0	0	16.7	0	33.3	0	0	0	50	
	Column%	0	0	25.0	0	3.4	0	0	0	0.5	
3-Upper class	N	0	0	1	2	4	1	2	0	18	28
	Row %	0	0	3.6	7.1	14.3	3.6	7.1	0	64.3	
	Column%	0	0	25.0	13.3	6.9	1.8	4.2	0	3.0	
4-Upper-Middle class	N	0	0	0	6	23	18	3	2	116	168
	Row %	0	0	0	3.6	13.7	10.7	1.8	1.2	69.0	
	Column%	0	0	0	40.0	39.7	32.7	6.3	40.0	19.4	
5-Middle class	N	0	0	1	5	19	13	6	1	167	212
	Row %	0	0	0.5	2.4	9	6.1	2.8	0.5	78.8	
	Column%	0	0	25.0	33.3	32.8	23.6	12.5	20.0	27.9	
6-Lower-Middle class	N	0	0	1	2	1	6	9	0	66	85
	Row %	0	0	1.2	2.4	1.2	7.1	10.6	0	77.6	
	Column%	0	0	25.0	13.3	1.7	10.9	18.8	0	11.0	
7-Lower class	N	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	13	21
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	4.8	33.3	0	61.9	
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	1.8	14.6	0	2.2	
8-Very Lower class	N	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	5
	Row %	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	20.0	0	60	
	Column%	0	0	0	0	0	1.8	2.1	0	0.5	
9-housewife	N	0	0	0	0	9	15	20	2	210	256
	Row %	0	0	0	0	3.5	5.9	7.8	0.8	82	
	Column%	0	0	0	0	15.5	27.3	41.7	40.0	35.1	
Sum		0	0	4	15	58	55	48	5	599	784

*The aggregated mobility statuses for employed mother–daughter dyads are: 85 (62.0%) upward, 39 (28.5%) immobile, and 13 (9.5%) downward. (Analysis based on N=137 dyads where both mother and daughter were employed.)

Table 7- Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of occupational Intergenerational Mobility Predictors

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
Occupational mobility comparison with father							
<i>Constant</i>	-2.463	.318		-7.736	0.001	-3.089	-1.838
<i>Educational mobility</i>	.796	.058	.582	13.776	0.001	.683	.910
<i>Father's education status</i>	.671	.058	.514	11.575	0.001	.558	.785
<i>Father's occupational classification</i>	-.578	.062	-.312	-9.353	0.001	-.699	-.457
<i>R=0.50, R-squared =0.24, df=3, F=87.340, sig <0.001</i>							
Occupational mobility comparison with mother							
<i>Constant</i>	-1.558	.294		-5.301	0.001	-2.135	-.981
<i>Educational mobility</i>	.839	.058	.546	14.376	0.001	.725	.954
<i>mother's education status</i>	.733	.058	.492	12.728	0.001	.620	.846
<i>mother's occupational classification</i>	-.835	.047	-.510	-17.818	0.001	-.927	-.743
<i>R=0.62, R-squared =0.38, df=3, F=167.043, sig <0.001</i>							

Conclusion and Discussion

While our findings confirm significant educational advancement among daughters relative to their parents—consistent with global trends in educational expansion (Stuhler, 2018)—they also document concerning patterns of occupational downgrading. This dissociation between educational and occupational trajectories poses a critical challenge to conventional meritocratic assumptions. The data reveal three salient patterns that require theoretical integration:

1. Educational Mobility Paradox: The analysis reveals a strongly origin-dependent pattern of educational mobility. Nearly 80% of daughters surpassed their fathers' education, and 89.93% surpassed their mothers', indicating a structural transformation driven by expanded tertiary access, family investment, and pro-education policies. However, upward mobility is far more likely for those from the highest origins, while downward mobility is concentrated among the lowest, reflecting advantage reproduction at the top and vulnerability at the

bottom—with 17.21% still experiencing downward movement. Provincial data from Guilan (Rasht's literacy rate rising from <40% to 93.8% over 50 years) underscore both the scale of progress and persistent disparities in quality access (Yaqubi, 2019).

2. Occupational Downgrading Phenomenon: The report on the social status of women in Iran regarding employment and economic activity shows that between 2002 and 2012, the participation rate of women in urban areas increased slightly relative to rural areas, but the overall national rate decreased. Furthermore, the participation rate of women in both urban and rural areas remains much lower than that of men, while their unemployment growth rate is substantially higher (Raghfar & Babapour, 2019).

A distinct pattern emerges for middle and lower- middle occupational groups: mobility is constrained, with a marked tendency toward downward movement or status replication rather than upward advancement. Upward mobility relative to mothers predominated for over 60% of the cohort, while downward mobility affected fewer than one in twelve—and was absent among the elite group, where all daughters surpassed their mothers. Paradoxically, 43.4% of women experienced downward occupational mobility despite educational gains, consistent with relative education theory (Horowitz, 2018), which attributes this to credential inflation from rapid educational expansion outpacing labor market restructuring. While Torche's (2018) cross- national work highlights the meritocratic equalizing power of a college degree, our Iranian case reveals contextual limits: persistent origin- status effects (for parental occupation) show that local labor structures and gendered cultural norms mediate outcomes for degree holders. This divergence suggests that higher education's equalizing potential depends critically on institutional environments that convert credentials into commensurate occupational rewards.

3. Structural Constraints Analysis: The predominance of housewives in our sample reflects enduring patriarchal constraints analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) and Lee et al. (2021). Gender ideologies that equate femininity with domestic roles interact with rigid labor market structures to create distinct institutional barriers:

- **Opportunity structure barriers:** Characterized by impermeable institutions and biased hiring practices.
- **Agency limitations:** Manifested as gendered socialization that actively reduces women's occupational aspirations.

- **Capacity gaps:** Resulting from unequal access to strategic professional networks and resources.

The relative education hypothesis (Horowitz, 2018) posits that when university degrees become common, credential inflation pushes some graduates into lower- skilled jobs due to a mismatch between educational expansion and labor market restructuring. In Iran, particularly in Rasht's urban private sector, this imbalance has intensified as professional upgrading failed to keep pace with enrolment growth. Consequently, many highly educated individuals, especially women, are forced into positions below their qualification levels—making them more vulnerable to downward intergenerational occupational mobility compared to their parents, who entered the labor market under more favorable conditions (Thijssen & Wolbers, 2016). Empirical evidence from the Netherlands further confirms that father's occupational status exerts a significant influence on first job outcomes, independent of formal education (Mugiyama & Toyonaga, 2022).

Our findings carry both theoretical and practical implications. They demonstrate that in contexts like Iran, educational and occupational mobility can no longer be treated as two sides of the same coin, calling for a reconceptualization of conventional social mobility models and a critical reassessment of the "social returns" on women's higher education. While the strong positive effect of educational mobility affirms the modernizing role of the education system, the persistent negative coefficient for parental occupational class exposes its limits: deeply embedded structural inequalities—including a gendered labor market and nepotism in high- status occupations—systematically downgrade the occupational returns to education for women, resulting in a net downward trend where educational gains fail to secure even occupational reproduction for a significant portion of the cohort.

To bridge this gap, targeted policy actions are essential: (1) aligning the labor market with the educated workforce through specialized apprenticeships and entrepreneurial incentives for women in emerging professions; (2) reducing women's disproportionate care burden via affordable childcare and parental leave systems that encourage male participation; and (3) enhancing transparency in institutional hiring and promotion processes. Ultimately, this research underscores that in highly gendered, credential- saturated labor markets, increasing women's educational attainment does not automatically translate into better occupational outcomes. Bridging this troubling gap requires concrete macro- level interventions and a scholarly reconsideration of the expected social benefits of investing in women's education.

This research offers a crucial conceptual lesson: in highly gendered, credential- saturated contexts like Iran, educational attainment and career progression must be viewed as distinct

trajectories—increased female education does not automatically yield better occupational outcomes, calling for scholarly reconsideration of its expected social returns and urgent macro-level interventions. Three policy pathways are proposed: (1) building institutional bridges from campus to career through targeted apprenticeships and entrepreneurial support that foster technical skills and professional networks; (2) reducing women's unequal caregiving burden via affordable, accessible childcare; and (3) enhancing transparency, objectivity, and openness in hiring and promotion procedures to mitigate systemic bias and ensure merit-based advancement. These steps can help translate societal investment in women's education into tangible professional and macroeconomic returns

Study limitations include its urban-focused, cross-sectional design. Future research should pursue longitudinal tracking of career trajectories, qualitative exploration of lived experiences of downwardly mobile educated women, and comparative studies across Iranian cities and urban-rural settings to disentangle local from national structural determinants of this complex phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with Ethical Guidelines

All ethical considerations, including confidentiality, trustworthiness, citation accuracy, respect for contributors, adherence to ethical data collection standards, and participant privacy, have been taken into account by the researchers. All study participants were assured of the confidentiality of the research findings, and their involvement was fully voluntary. This study was conducted within the framework of the Ethics Committee on research of the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences (Ethics Code: IR.USWR.REC.1398.200).

Acknowledgments

This paper is derived from the doctoral dissertation of the first author in the field of Health and Social Welfare at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran, which benefited from the valuable guidance of the dissertation supervisor. The researchers wish to thank the Deputy of Research at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran. Special thanks are also extended to the women of Rasht who participated in this study for their patience and trust, as well as to all those who assisted the researchers in conducting this study.

Funding

This paper is based on a research project titled "Intergenerational social mobility status and its relationship with quality of life in women of Rasht city," which was supported by the University of Rehabilitation Sciences and Social Welfare under contract number 961206003.

Authors' Contributions

Asiyeh Namazi prepared the initial draft of the manuscript and was responsible for article submission and managing responses to referee feedback. Hasan Rafiey & Mirtaher Mousavi, as the thesis supervisors, provided oversight and guidance throughout the research. Ameneh Setareh Forouzan & Gholamreza Ghaedamini Harouni, as thesis advisors, offered important methodological insights and contributed to the paper's methodology.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

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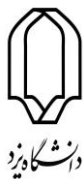
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آیا زنان ایرانی از والدین خود پیروی می‌کنند؟ موردی از تحرک بین‌نسلی آموزشی در میان زنان رشت

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مقاله پژوهشی

چکیده

زمینه و هدف: تحرک اجتماعی، به‌عنوان بعد اساسی از سیستم‌های طبقه‌بندی، علی‌رغم اهمیت نظری آن برای درک نابرابری، در میان زنان ایران کمتر مورد مطالعه قرار گرفته است. این مطالعه روندهای تحرک آموزشی و شغلی بین نسلی را در میان زنان متأهل در رشت بررسی می‌کند، به شکاف‌های مهم در تحقیقات تحرک جنسیت‌محور می‌پردازد و ارتباط فرضی بین آموزش و پیشرفت حرفه‌ای را ارزیابی می‌کند.

روش و داده‌ها: یک پیمایش مقطعی از ۸۰۰ زن متأهل در شهر رشت با استفاده از نمونه‌گیری تصادفی طبقه‌بندی‌شده (بر اساس سن، سطح تحصیلات و منطقه) انجام شد. داده‌ها از طریق پرسشنامه‌های ساختار یافته (دموگرافیک، تحصیلات/شغل والدین/پاسخ‌دهنده) جمع‌آوری و با استفاده از ماتریس‌های تحرک و مدل‌های خطی لگاریتمی تحلیل شدند.

یافته‌ها: مطالعه تفاوت‌های قابل‌توجهی را آشکار می‌کند: ۷۹٫۹۷٪ از زنان نسبت به پدران و ۸۹٫۹۳٪ نسبت به مادران تحرک آموزشی صعودی داشتند. در مقابل، تنها ۳۶٫۶٪ تحرک شغلی صعودی نسبت به پدران خود کسب کردند. این ناسازگاری فرضیه‌ها را که دستاوردهای آموزشی به‌طور خطی به پیشرفت حرفه‌ای تبدیل می‌شوند، به چالش می‌کشد و نشان می‌دهد که موانع ساختاری در بازارهای کار مسیرهای شغلی زنان را، علی‌رغم پیشرفت تحصیلی آنها، محدود می‌کند.

بحث و نتیجه‌گیری: یافته‌ها بر وجود محدودیت‌های پایدار جنسیتی در تبدیل سرمایه آموزشی به تحرک شغلی در ایران تأکید می‌کند. سیاست‌گذاران باید نابرابری‌های ساختاری را برطرف سازند. برای مثال از طریق اجرای قوانین شفافیت دستمزدی، اعطای یارانه به امکانات نگهداری از کودک در محل کار به منظور کاهش جریمه مادری، و اعمال سهمیه‌های هدفمند برای زنان در نقش‌های مدیریت ارشد در سازمان‌های بخش دولتی، تا بازده اجتماعی آموزش زنان افزایش یابد. این مطالعه اولین معیار تجربی برای روندهای تحرک جنسیت‌محور در ایران فراهم می‌کند و بینش‌های عملی برای کاهش نابرابری ارائه می‌دهد.

واژگان کلیدی: تحرک، تحرک آموزشی، تحرک اجتماعی بین نسلی، وضعیت شغلی، طبقه‌بندی اجتماعی.

پیام اصلی: از نظر نظری، مطالعه ما نشان می‌دهد که در زمینه‌هایی مانند ایران، دیگر نمی‌توان فرض کرد که تحرک آموزشی و شغلی دو روی یک سکه‌اند. این جدایی مفاهیم، بازاندیشی در مدل‌های مرسوم تحرک اجتماعی و ارزیابی مجدد انتقادی «بازده اجتماعی» سرمایه‌گذاری قابل توجه در آموزش عالی زنان را ایجاب می‌کند.

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۴/۱۰/۲۴

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۴/۰۴/۱۴

ارجاع: نمازی، آسیه؛ رفیعی، حسن؛ موسوی، میرطاهر؛ ستاره فروزان، آمنه؛ قائدامینی هارونی، غلامرضا (۱۴۰۴). آیا زنان ایرانی از والدین خود پیروی می‌کنند؟ موردی از تحرک بین‌نسلی آموزشی در میان زنان رشت، تداوم و تغییر اجتماعی، ۴ (شماره ویژه)، ۳۲-۷.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/JSCC.2026.SI01.23343.1281>

